

**GOSPEL SHAPED**  
**OUTREACH**

*Handbook*





# GOSPEL SHAPED OUTREACH

*Erik Raymond*



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COALITION

Gospel Shaped Outreach Handbook

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# PREFACE

## GROWING A GOSPEL SHAPED CHURCH

The Gospel Coalition is a group of pastors and churches in the Reformed heritage who delight in the truth and power of the gospel, and who want the gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected to lie at the center of all we cherish, preach and teach.

We want churches called into existence by the gospel to be shaped by the gospel in their everyday life.

Through our fellowship, conferences, and online and printed media, we have sought to encourage pastors and church leaders to calibrate their lives around what is of first importance—the gospel of Christ. In these resources, we want to provide those same pastors with the tools to excite and equip church members with this mindset.

In our foundation documents, we identified five areas that should mark the lives of believers in a local fellowship:

1. Empowered corporate worship
2. Evangelistic effectiveness
3. Counter-cultural community
4. The integration of faith and work
5. The doing of justice and mercy

We believe that a church utterly committed to winsome and theologically substantial expository preaching, and that lives out the gospel in these areas, will display its commitment to dynamic evangelism, apologetics, and church planting. These gospel-shaped churches will emphasize repentance, personal renewal, holiness, and the wonderful life of the church as the body of Christ. At the same time, there will be engagement with the social structures of ordinary people, and cultural engagement with art, business, scholarship and government. The church will be characterized by firm devotion to the truth on the one hand, and by transparent compassion on the other.

The Gospel Coalition believes in the priority of the local church, and that the local church is the best place to discuss these five ministry drivers and decide how to integrate them into life and mission. So, while being clear on the biblical principles, these resources give space to consider what a genuine expression of a gospel-shaped church looks like for you in the place where God has put you, and with the people he has gathered into fellowship with you.

Through formal teaching sessions, daily Bible devotionals, group Bible studies and the regular preaching ministry, it is our hope and prayer that congregations will grow into maturity, and so honor and glorify our great God and Savior.



**Don Carson**  
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Carson".

**Tim Keller**  
Vice President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy J. Keller".





# INTRODUCTION

Evangelicals, by definition, should believe in and practice evangelism. And yet many churches and Christians can lose sight of this primary goal for our life and work.

This is not an “evangelism course” like many others available. Often these courses will focus on the “how to” of evangelism, offering various techniques, programs and methods of outreach that individuals and churches can use. These can be incredibly helpful in giving us the confidence and skills to explain the good news to others.

But this course is different.

In the nine sessions in this curriculum, I have not sought to show you a particular way of explaining the gospel, but to lay strong biblical foundations for a broad and deep appreciation of the wonderful gospel of grace that we are called to understand, believe, rejoice in and proclaim to a waiting world.

As you work through the material, you will be able to share your own experiences, and benefit from the ideas and encouragement of your fellowship. You will also, no doubt, discover that you need more help and training in specific aspects of your witness for Christ in your community. This course will not be the last word on evangelism, for you or your church. But what I am aiming to do is to impress upon you, both as individuals and as a whole church, a deep conviction that God’s mission of salvation in the world is also your mission; and that he is inviting you into the privilege of praying and working to advance his kingdom among your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and community.

The Gospel Coalition identifies five hallmarks of a gospel-shaped church. One of those is evangelistic effectiveness, about which it says:

*Because the gospel (unlike religious moralism) produces people who do not disdain those who disagree with them, a truly gospel-centered church should be filled with members who winsomely address people’s hopes and aspirations with Christ and his saving work. We have a vision for a*

*church that sees conversions of rich and poor, highly educated and less educated, men and women, old and young, married and single, and all races. We hope to draw highly secular and postmodern people, as well as reaching religious and traditional people. Because of the attractiveness of its community and the humility of its people, a gospel-centered church should find people in its midst who are exploring and trying to understand Christianity. It must welcome them in hundreds of ways. It will do little to make them "comfortable" but will do much to make its message understandable. In addition to all this, gospel-centered churches will have a bias toward church planting as one of the most effective means of evangelism there is.*

It is my prayer that as you work through this curriculum, you and your church will become more and more the community and people that you are called to be: a fellowship that is effective at, and excited about, bringing the gospel to those around you.



**Erik Raymond**





# HOW TO USE GOSPEL SHAPED OUTREACH



**MAIN TEACHING SESSION** This session combines watching short talks on a DVD or listening to “live” talks with times for discussion. These prompt you to think about what you have heard and how it might apply to your church and cultural context. Bear in mind that there is not necessarily a “right answer” to every question!



**DEVOTIONALS** Each session comes with six daily personal devotionals. These look at passages that are linked to the theme of the Main Teaching Session, and are for you to read and meditate on at home through the week after the session. You may like to do them in addition to or instead of your usual daily devotionals, or use them to begin such a practice.



**JOURNAL** As you reflect on what you have learned as a group and in your personal devotionals, use this page to record the main truths that have struck you, things you need to pray about, and issues you’d like to discuss further or questions you’d like to ask.



**BIBLE STUDY** As part of this curriculum, your church may be running weekly Bible Studies as well as the Main Teaching Sessions. These look more closely at a passage and help you focus on an aspect of the Main Teaching Session. If your church is not using this part of the curriculum, you could work through it on your own or with another church member.



**SERMON NOTES** Your church’s preaching program may be following this curriculum; space has been provided for you to make notes on these sermons in your Handbook.







# **SESSION 1:** **HOW ARE WE DOING?**

**WHAT IS GOSPEL-SHAPED EVANGELISM, AND HOW SHOULD THAT MOLD OUR CHURCH? THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WE WILL BE CONSIDERING IN THESE SESSIONS. FIRST, WE NEED TO SEE WHAT EVANGELISM ACTUALLY IS; THEN UNDERSTAND WHAT AN EVANGELISTIC CHURCH CULTURE WOULD LOOK LIKE; AND FINALLY REFLECT UPON WHERE WE ARE AT IN OUR OWN CHURCH AND LIVES.**



1. *What is the purpose of the church's outreach efforts?*

2. *How does the church's outreach efforts align with its mission statement?*

3. *What are the key components of the church's outreach efforts?*

4. *How does the church's outreach efforts impact the community?*

5. *What are the challenges facing the church's outreach efforts?*

6. *How does the church's outreach efforts address the needs of the community?*

7. *What are the resources needed for the church's outreach efforts?*

8. *How does the church's outreach efforts measure success?*

9. *What are the future goals for the church's outreach efforts?*

10. *How does the church's outreach efforts foster a sense of community?*

11. *What are the key takeaways from the church's outreach efforts?*

12. *How does the church's outreach efforts inspire others?*

13. *What are the lessons learned from the church's outreach efforts?*

14. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote social justice?*

15. *What are the key findings of the church's outreach efforts?*

16. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote spiritual growth?*

17. *What are the key insights from the church's outreach efforts?*

18. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote holistic health?*

19. *What are the key outcomes of the church's outreach efforts?*

20. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote peace and reconciliation?*

21. *What are the key messages from the church's outreach efforts?*

22. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote environmental stewardship?*

23. *What are the key themes of the church's outreach efforts?*

24. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote cultural awareness?*

25. *What are the key principles of the church's outreach efforts?*

26. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote social responsibility?*

27. *What are the key values of the church's outreach efforts?*

28. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote global unity?*

29. *What are the key priorities of the church's outreach efforts?*

30. *How does the church's outreach efforts promote a sense of purpose?*



# HOW ARE WE DOING?

## *Discuss*

What comes into your mind when you hear the word “evangelism”?

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## WATCH DVD 1.1 OR LISTEN TO TALK 1.1

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## *Discuss*

“Over time, evangelism becomes less of a reflex and more of a challenge.”

Do you agree? Have you experienced a gradual decline in your own personal evangelism? What factors do you think might have contributed to this?

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**ROMANS 10:13-15**

<sup>13</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

What needs to happen before someone becomes a Christian (“calls on the name of the Lord”)? List the steps from the passage.

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In verse 15, Paul describes evangelism as “beautiful.” Why do we often forget that evangelism is like this?

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**WATCH DVD 1.2 OR LISTEN TO TALK 1.2**

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## Discuss



### EPHESIANS 6:18-20

*<sup>18</sup> To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

#### 1. PRAY

Why do you think Paul asks them to pray for words and for boldness?

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When was the last time you asked someone to pray for your faithfulness in evangelism?

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Think of someone you can ask to pray for you and your faithfulness to “declare it boldly.”

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## 2. TAKE

When Paul and Silas were in prison, the earthquake gave them the opportunity to escape—but they didn't. Instead, they took the opportunity to tell their jailer the gospel (Acts 16:23-34).

Honestly, what do you think your response would have been if you had been Paul or Silas? Would you have taken the opportunity to escape?

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Can you recall an example when God gave you an evangelistic opportunity in a surprising way? Did you take it? If not, what stopped you?

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## 3. MAKE

*"The only qualification for evangelism is to be a Christian."*

Does this surprise you? How is it an exciting challenge?

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What did you hear on the DVD / in the talk that particularly motivated you to tell people the gospel message?

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Think of two people you would like to share the gospel with in the next month. Discuss how you could make opportunities to do this. Commit to praying regularly for one another, and to asking each other how this is going.

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### *Pray*

Pray for your church as it works through this curriculum. Pray that you will grow in your excitement about the gospel, that you will encourage one another, and that you will learn together what it means to be a church that has a culture of evangelism.

Pray for each other individually that you will make opportunities to share the gospel with the two people you listed above, and that you will have the words to say and the boldness to say them.

Pray that you will share the Lord's compassion for those who are hopeless and helpless without Jesus; and that you will be jealous for God's glory.



# DAILY BIBLE DEVOTIONALS

This week our daily readings are focused on Acts 17, and the apostle Paul's evangelism in the ancient Greek city of Athens.

## *Day 1*

### **ACTS 17:16-17**

Paul is alone in Athens, the intellectual and philosophical center of the Roman world, having been chased out of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea by opponents of the gospel.

**Q:** *How does Paul feel, and why (v 16)?*

**Q:** *How does this cause him to act (v 17)?*

If we are driven by a longing for Christ's glory, we will see, feel and do as Paul did. We will not notice the buildings or politics of our cities so much as the idolatry. We will not feel complacent or comfortable; rather, we will be distressed that Jesus is ignored. And our passion for Christ in a place of idols will cause us to speak out.

**Q:** *Do you see as Paul did? Do you feel as he did?*

**Q:** *What will change today if you do?*

**PRAY:** *Lord, make me jealous for your glory. Give me eyes to see as Paul did, a heart to feel what he did, and a mouth to speak as he did.*

## *Day 2*

### **ACTS 17:17-18**

**Q:** *What groups does Paul speak to?*

**Q:** *What are the equivalents of those groups in your culture today?*

Religious God-fearing people need to hear about "Jesus and the resurrection" (v 18), for our religious duties cannot save us. Ordinary, busy people need to hear about the Lord Jesus as they go about their lives, for all lives will end. And academic people need to hear about him too, because human wisdom cannot fathom, far less achieve, immortality.

Wherever you go today, and whoever you meet today, the resurrection will be gloriously good news, and urgently needed news.

**Q:** *Think about the non-believers you will likely meet today. How can you make and take an opportunity to tell them about the risen Jesus?*

**PRAY:** *Lord, thank you that the gospel is good news for everyone. Please enable me to share Jesus with someone, or several people, today.*

*Day 3***ACTS 17:19-23**

Paul is speaking to the ruling council of Athens: one of the most learned, and intimidating, gatherings in the world.

**Q:** What does Paul “perceive” about the Athenians (v 22)?

**Q:** What are these well-educated men totally ignorant of?

**Q:** What does Paul promise (v 23)?

If we wish to share the gospel with people, we must connect the gospel to people. Paul meets these men where they are at: worshipping “the unknown god.” He connects to their belief systems, and then offers the gospel as the answer to their ignorance—the God they admit they do not know has made himself knowable.

To witness well, we must “see”: we must listen to people, understand them and know their hopes and fears. And we must “proclaim”: invite them to discover the One who makes sense of life.

**Q:** Think about one non-Christian you know well. How does the good news connect to their hopes or fears? How is it good news for them specifically?

**PRAY:** Lord, let me see how the gospel connects to the beliefs, dreams and fears of those around me.

*Day 4***ACTS 17:24-28**

Paul begins his gospel address by proclaiming who God is, and who we are.

**Q:** Who is God? What has he done?

**Q:** Why did God put people in the places and times in which they live (v 27)?

We often think God needs us: he requires our service for his work to be done. Verse 25 reminds us that this is far from true! In fact, we need God, and he graciously allows us to be part of his world, and part of his purposes. And in his sovereignty, he has placed everyone just where he wants them. You will not meet anyone by accident. No interaction will be chance.

Why has God placed people where he has? Because he is at work to reach out to people so that they may reach out to him (v 27). The reason your neighbor lives where they do is so they might be reached for the gospel; the reason you live where you do is so that you might be the way God reaches out to them. This transforms your view of your day! It makes your everyday interactions far more exciting!

**Q:** Is this how you view each day? What will change if you do?

**PRAY:** Father, your sovereign goodness and purposes are amazing! Please use me as part of them today.

## Day 5

### ACTS 17:29-31

Athens is full of idol-statues (v 16). How ridiculous, Paul says, to worship something you can make! It is like thinking you can create your own parent (v 29)!

**Q:** *What does Paul declare will happen in the future (v 31)?*

God has written a day on his calendar: *judgment*. It is a day all people everywhere need to be prepared for. The event is certain, proved by the resurrection. The name of the Judge is definite, identified by that resurrection.

**Q:** *What action does the resurrection in the past, and Judgment Day in the future, call for (v 30)?*

Repentance means turning from self-rule to Christ's rule, and from self-reliance to Christ-reliance. It is humbling, but also liberating; and it turns Judgment Day from a dead end into a doorway. So calling someone to repent is both a direct challenge to them, and a wonderful invitation for them.

**Q:** *Is there someone you need to call to repent, gently but firmly?*

**PRAY:** *Lord, thank you that you are my Judge and my Savior. Give me grace to repent where and when I need to. And give me courage to invite others to repent where and when I can.*

## Day 6

It is easy to have a rose-tinted view of the apostle Paul's evangelism—that he preached in the morning, hundreds repented by noon, a church was founded in the afternoon, and Paul then wrote a book of Scripture in the evening. In reality, Paul's experience of evangelism was much more like ours...

### ACTS 17:32-34

**Q:** *What two responses are there to the idea of a resurrection (v 32)?*

**Q:** *What happens to a few of the second group (v 34)?*

**Q:** *What can we learn about evangelism here?*

The pessimistic view is that after all that time and effort, the results were sparse amid the sneering. But look again with a gospel focus; what a glorious result! Several miracles occurred! Several eternal destinations were utterly changed! We must not be surprised when our witness is met with sneering; we should be expecting that sometimes it will provoke interest; and we will be thrilled if and when we see the miracle of belief in Jesus, and know we had the privilege of being used by God. Paul was a man like us—and so we can witness like him.

**PRAY:** *Father, help me to witness faithfully and fully, leaving the results to you.*





# JOURNAL

What I've learned or been particularly struck by this week...

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What I want to change in my perspectives or actions as a result of this week...

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Things I would like to think about more or discuss with others at my church...

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# BIBLE STUDY

## *Discuss*

Many businesses list their main aims as a “mission statement” to help them keep focused when making decisions, and to order their priorities.

Talk about some of these that you know—perhaps a company that you have worked for. What happens when an organization does not have specific aims or priorities?



## **READ ACTS 1:1-11**

*<sup>1</sup> In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach...*

1. What is exciting about the word “began” in Acts 1:1?

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2. What does Jesus want the disciples to do, and why (v 4-8)? Why might they have felt terrified by this command?

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3. What are the suggestions in the passage that Jesus’ plans for his people are different from what the disciples expected (v 6-8)?

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4. Jesus speaks of witnesses going "to the end of the earth" (v 8). How does this show that he had in mind not only those he was speaking to, but all his followers, throughout the ages?

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5. What did the first disciples need in order to be able to spread the gospel (v 2, 3, 5, 8)? What would go wrong if one of these was missing?

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Do we need anything different?

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6. So how does Jesus work in the world today to spread the gospel?

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7. What is the implication of what the angels say in verse 11?  
What were the apostles still hanging onto, and what should they have been doing?  
How can we be similarly confused?

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## *Apply*

**FOR YOURSELF:** Where would you list “telling the good news about Jesus to others” on the list of your personal priorities? What do you struggle with most—the desire to witness, the words to say, or the boldness to say them?

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**FOR YOUR CHURCH:** Look over your church calendar of events. What do you conclude about how important outreach is to you as a church family at the moment? How are you praying for, taking and making opportunities to share the gospel as a church together?

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## *Pray*

**FOR THE GROUP:** Ask God to give you opportunities, the words and boldness to speak about the gospel of Christ.

**FOR YOUR WHOLE CHURCH:** Pray that working through this curriculum would be a constructive exercise for your church. Pray for unity and for your leaders. And pray that the end result will be that your church is more committed to gospel-shaped outreach.



# SERMON NOTES

Bible passage:

Date:

Lined area for sermon notes, consisting of 20 horizontal blue lines.

